

TESTIMONY OF SHELLY FORTIER
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. No. 6386 An Act Delaying Implementation of Legislation
Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction
and In Support of Expansion of Family Support Centers

MARCH 2, 2009

Hello, my name is Shelly Fortier and this is my 13 year old son Tevin. I am speaking in opposition to House Bill 6386.

Tevin came to me in 2001 as a DCF child who had suffered from years of abuse and neglect both from his birth family as well as his foster family. He came to me with many struggles both emotionally and educationally.

He has always attended regular education in school, but was rather far behind his peers in the early years. This frustration educationally made it difficult for him to become accepted socially as well. He acted out to gain the attention of adults and others. He did not care if he was getting negative attention, he just wanted the attention that he had not received in the first 6 years of his life.

I have had him in counseling since the tender age of 6, he has attended the Extended Day Treatment program offered by the Village on 2 separate occasions, we have also done family support through Casey Family services as well as the Village. He is on medication for Mood disorder as well as for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome which he was diagnosed with in 2005.

His anger and outbursts were always there, he would mature year to year, but still struggled with how to gain control over his emotions as to not hurt himself or others around him. As he grew bigger and stronger his outbursts become less frequent, but at times more violent. He, as you can see is a very good sized young man at the age of 13. He will continue to become bigger and stronger and that was where I was scared. I was scared that one day he would hurt me or himself or someone else because he did not know how to channel his anger in a positive way. I felt we had tried everything. Then one day in late August of last year Tevin became very angry and went into a rage, pushing me and hitting me and saying really mean rotten things to me. This was not the Tevin that we all know and love, but the Tevin who clearly had no idea how to express himself in a proper manner. He was headed for destruction. I ended up having to call 911 on my own son for both of our safety.

He was taken to Children's Medical Center where he was evacuated and returned back to me later that evening. A few days after the incident he had come to me saying that he felt he needed more help than just the therapy he was receiving and that he wanted to change and to make better choices, he just did not know how. I filed a Family with Service Needs petition to the court system and was lucky enough to be referred to Wheeler Clinic and their Family Support Center.

The staff at Wheeler was both professional, as well as supportive to not only my son, but to me as well. They met with us several times to see what program would best fit Tevin's needs. They decided to have him be a part of the TARGET program which helps children like Tevin manage their anger, anxiety and pain while they improve their interpersonal skills. Tevin attended the 10 weeks of classes and gained valuable information to help him with everyday life experiences that he may encounter. The staff was also available to me pretty much 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They answered calls from me at all hours of the day and were able to help us through a few more rough times. This program taught Tevin to slow down his thinking and to think before reacting to situations. He has been able to use these tools in school, sports and in his everyday life. I can not thank the staff at Wheeler Clinic enough for helping put my son on a path for success. He is now an honor roll student in the seventh grade and has aspirations of attending college and playing sports. His future looks a lot brighter in part due to the care and support he was given while attending the Family Support Center. I feel that this program could and will help many more children in the future if they are given the chance. Let's all try to help these kids stay on the right track by giving them the support that they may need both at home as well as at school. Let's keep children like my son, Tevin, out of the court system and in the school systems becoming valuable members of society.

Thank you all for your time.

Shelly Fortier
Windsor CT 06095
2-28-09